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Infrastructure and the Development of Australia's Regional Areas

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Committee Members,

I am making this submission to you as a very concerned Transport operator and Australian citizen.

The Northern Region of Victoria is a vibrant and growing area of Australia. We are strategically positioned to serve lower N.S.W. and the Riverland of South Australia, with transport needs whether domestically or for export. We can also offer other social services to these areas as a hub for social and transport needs for the Tri-State Hinterland.

As I am no authority on the many social offerings that we have available I would like to concentrate on where I may offer some advice, - TRANSPORT - Wakefields is a fourth generation family transport business and up until four years ago, strictly a road user for all transport functions. Today we operate a road transport arm as well as our intermodal functions which link road, rail, sea & air. It is this area which I see as the engine room to economic viability to regional export growth. In rail your infrastructure dollars can be of tremendous help to an area such as ours.

As is always the case when we compare road against rail, the funding dollar for each mode seems to be out of kilter. I understand all Australian citizens have the use of the road and not the rail, but surely if we concentrate our efforts on freight movements by rail this would reduce the expenditure required to keep the existing road infrastructure at an acceptable level to the general public. There would also be social benefits attached to reducing heavy truck movements on open highways.

Having transferred our export business from road to rail, we have taken 9,300 trips from Merbein to Melbourne and return using heavy vehicles from the road. This service has

been transferred to the rail, which must have enormous social and road maintenance ramifications.

Rail Infrastructure is of paramount importance to our region and we have an opportunity to gather all the export products from the Tri-State Hinterland effectively and efficiently transferring them by rail to Melbourne, Geelong and Portland

If the required infrastructure were to be upgraded and some new infrastructure built, the export community would be better served. We could increase axle weight loadings from the level now at 19 tonne per axle at 80 kph to the industry standard of 25 tonne per axle at 115 kph. The rail track on our line is at this stage unable to cope with speeds over 80 kph and we have speed restrictions which limit us to 50 kph in some areas. This is very frustrating.

The proposal I would like the Committee to look at is funding for :

- * **the upgrading of the existing line to meet industry standards**
- * **the introduction of dual gauge from Yelta to Lascelles**
- * **a new standard gauge line some 27 km from Lascelles to Hopetoun.**

The benefits this proposal will give our regional area, are almost incomprehensible. The trip time from Melbourne to Merbein would be more than halved from 17 hrs to 7.5 hrs. This means instead of having two trains in the loop to achieve a daily service, one train can operate and achieve the same service.

- this would relate to a 40% reduction in running costs (personal estimate)
- better rolling stock utilisation,
- better Infrastructure utilisation due to more demand by reducing travelling time. (This same journey made with one of our trucks only takes 6 hrs).

If this is achieved it will in effect reduce the price charged to the exporter and make our products more globally competitive.

The interface between Rail and Sea in Melbourne is very good but in this years State Budget, Dock Link Road will hopefully be extended to incorporate North Dynon (where country rail services end).

This extension allows movements of 115 tonne gross from rail to sea and means a doubling in efficiencies from what we now have. The reality of this rail upgrading would mean a more efficient transport chain and one which could cope with future exports to the year 2020.

The second part of my proposal is to do with bulk commodities.

As you may be aware, mineral sands deposits are plentiful and of a superior grade from our region. We will have our first sand mining company starting operation in early 2000

This is exciting for our region but we need to make transporting this product to the waterfront as efficient and flexible as possible as almost all product will be exported.

This mining will definitely fill the full quota of your guidelines.

- * It has attracted all the major sand mining companies to stake claims
- * It will deliver long term job opportunities
- * It will deliver long term economic benefits to the wider community
- * It will generate foreign currency
- * There is a long term market for this product

All we need to do is create an environment for industry standard transport to allow this to grow. The deposit just north of us at Merbein is sustainable with over one hundred years of mining and this is only one company and one deposit.

In discussions with another sand mining companies, it is claimed that within 5 years companies will be exporting 350,000 tonnes per annum of this product. Rail and the Port of Portland are seen as the only effective option unless they road it to Adelaide which means 14,000 truck loads per annum - stressing our road system. In my mind the choice is clear.

The plan is to run a standard gauge line with the existing broad gauge. This means a third rail placed inside the two existing tracks allowing us to run broad gauge to Melbourne and Geelong, and standard to Portland. A new line put down in standard gauge from Lascelles to Hopetoun (some 27 km) to link up with the existing standard gauge track from Hopetoun to Portland. This will enable grains and sands to be loaded at a dedicated bulk facility from a siding that runs into the port.

Portland has some clear advantages considering that it is the only port in Victoria to be classified as a deep water port (no dredging costs) and able to take the required 80,000 tonne Vessels.

Basically this infrastructure will enable the expected 1.5 million tonnes pa to travel to Portland for bulk loading or Melbourne and Geelong for container trade, It will also allow container trade from our Tri-State Hinterland to be exported to Worlds Best Practice.

Costings

The Department of Infrastructure did some evaluations and the results were:-

- * Dual gauge from Yelta to Lascelles and new line from Lascelles to Hopetoun - **\$30 million**

- * The upgrade costing wasn't done however standard gauging was, so for an idea I will use this costing (upgrading should be cheaper than standard gauging) - **\$58 million**

Could I please have some time to make a few points?

Environmental Issues

To transport some 2000 tonnes of grain from Yelta to

Geelong by Rail requires:

- * A single train
- * A single driver and a crew resource input of some 20 man hours
- * An engine capacity of some 4500kw
- * Approximately 7000 litres of fuel

The same job, using conventional semitrailer tippers would require:

- * Eighty trucks
- * Some 640 hours of driving
- * A total engine capacity of 24000kw
- * Fuel consumption of around 21,000 litres

In addition, the danger to the public and the wear and tear of eighty semitrailer tippers on the highways is much more damaging than a single train on the railway line.

- It is a common fact within the industry worldwide, cost effectiveness and efficiencies of transport modes goes: Sea, Rail, Road, Air.
- Commonwealth, State and Local Government from 1987-88 to 1996-97 invested 12.75 billion in rail Infrastructure and for the same period spent 55.39 billion on road related Infrastructure.(BTCE 1997)
- * Irrespective of ownership rail tracks are a National asset
- Rationalisation of Intrastate rail networks by State Governments has seen closure of rail lines that could later be vital to State/Federal developments.
- * Private ownership of roads is now a fact of the future (toll roads eg City Link) but consideration is given that these roads are not part of the National asset
- Recent expenditure on the Calder Hwy between Bendigo and Mildura is

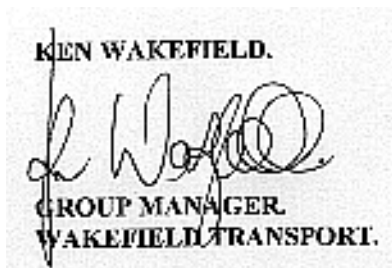
- 3 to 6 million for the next 10 to 5 years. No commitment to rail.(Calder Hwy Strategy 95)
- * Based on a hypothetical “Carbon Tax” on diesel fuel at 14.8 cpl a transport task of 100 net tonne kilometres (NTK) could expect a six axle truck 0.51 cents per NTK, a double road train 0.30 cents per NTK and rail transport .015 cents per NTK (Sub 47, Submission p.617)
- * Two projects (concrete sleepers / track upgrade - Adelaide Hills access) on the Melbourne Adelaide Line could reduce transit times by three hours for a cost of \$130 million. Yet \$138 million is being spent on road Improvements in the Adelaide hills to reduce transit times by ten minutes.
- * The city link project costs more than twice the cost to standardise all Victoria’s Rail network.

Regionally I feel this proposal will have far reaching effects, it will allow our Tri-State Hinterland to grow and face no growing pain associated with heavy vehicle movements. This would give us an inexhaustible transport resource allowing dedicated bulk trains as well as dedicated container trains with timely departures and arrivals.

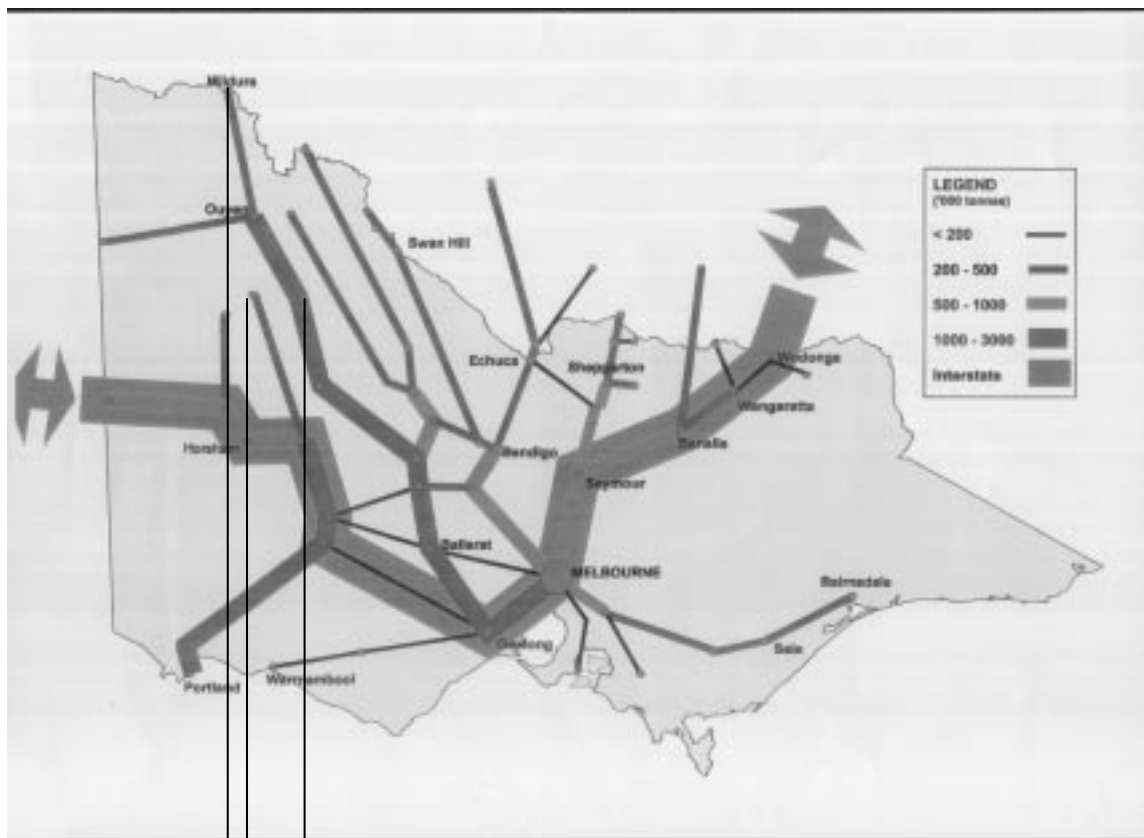
As it has been only a day since hearing of this opportunity to make a submission, please understand this information is gathered from what I have on hand and my own experiences.

If you feel that my proposal has merit I would be happy provide you with more information, brief you collectively, or help arrange a visit to explain and show you the situation in more detail.

Any further information please do not hesitate to call.



Following is a intrastate rail network diagram



Merbein

Hopetoun

Lascelles

